

Enforcing the Settlement

27 OCTOBER 1962

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OPERATIONAL



This photo of an MRBM site at San Cristobal taken on 27 October by a Navy Crusader, from an altitude of about 500 feet, clearly shows that the missile battery is operational. The Cuban Missile Crisis reached a climax that day.

The crisis had passed and the world soon breathed easier, but the international confrontation would not end until both sides carried out their ends of the agreement. And, until the end of October, Washington was not certain that the Soviets would do so. Low-level reconnaissance revealed that while some missile erectors were taken from the launch pads, the construction and camouflaging of support facilities and equipment proceeded. In addition, Soviet technicians continued to uncrate and assemble more of the Il-28 bombers, which Washington considered offensive weapons.

The situation remained tense at sea. On 29 October, *Charles P. Cecil* (DDR 835) located and stayed on top of a submerged Soviet submarine (contact C-20), despite the best efforts of the boat to evade her pursuer. Finally, after enduring thirty-five hours of constant surveillance with active sonar, the Foxtrot-class boat surfaced and proceeded due east. Patrol aircraft shadowed and photographed the vessel, identified as Soviet submarine *F 911*.

Another boat (contact C-18), trailed by *Keppler*, surfaced on 30 October. The submarine's crew had painted out the numbers on her sail, but

naval intelligence still was able to identify the unit as *F 945*. Because the submarine did not submerge again once free of the quarantine area, the normal practice, the Americans concluded that the vessel had suffered a serious mechanical failure. Thus, as the boat shaped a northeasterly course on the surface, U.S. naval vessels and aircraft had ample opportunity to photograph and observe their maritime opponent.

Another problem that developed was Castro's displeasure over the Soviet retrenchment and opposition to the terms of the U.S.-Soviet understanding. Castro stated

that agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union did not apply to Cuba. He threatened to shoot down any U.S. reconnaissance aircraft spotted over the island. Moreover, in contrast to the Soviets, the Cubans would not allow on-site inspection of the missile sites in their country by a neutral party. The most Castro would agree to was a 30 October visit to Havana by U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations.

As Washington analyzed the Soviet and Cuban reactions to the Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding, naval forces maintained their vigil in the Atlantic and the Caribbean. U.S. and Canadian units continued to monitor the broad expanse of the Atlantic. On 31 October, the destroyer escort *Calcaterra* (DER 390) took over from *Mills* (DER 383) the shadowing of Soviet tanker *Terek*. In addition, to lower the number of ships needed at sea, Admiral Dennison ordered the fleet to move the quarantine line closer to Cuba. During 30-31 October, Task Force 136 took up positions on the new line, codenamed "Chestnut," that ran northwest from Puerto Rico along the Atlantic side of the Bahamas. An antisubmarine HUK group operated about 150 miles northeast of the center of this new line.

Finally, on 1 November, American intelligence gained indications that the Soviets and the Cubans would adhere to the terms of the Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding.

Aerial photographs resulting from that day's low-level reconnaissance missions over the island revealed an astonishing number of changes. Overnight, the Soviets had removed many of the missiles and erectors, crated their launching stands, and even begun the destruction of the launch pads. Clearly, the Soviets were complying with the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement. Furthermore, despite Castro's hostile rhetoric, his forces did not fire on the Navy, Marine, and Air Force photoreconnaissance planes.

While these developments were encouraging,

Washington considered it essential, given Khrushchev's earlier duplicity, to verify the removal of Soviet offensive weapons from Cuba. In fact, it was vital that the United States be confident that all missiles, Beagle bombers, and other systems were withdrawn. Moreover, potentially dangerous Soviet submarines still prowled the waters near the quarantine line and in the Atlantic and had to be closely watched. In this effort, which lasted through the end of November, the U.S. Navy was a prominent player.

Khrushchev's representatives at the United



Navy, Marine, and Air Force aviators discuss their low-level reconnaissance missions over Cuba, reflecting the multiservice nature of operations during the missile crisis. Pictured left to right: Lt. Col. Joseph O'Grady, commander of the Air Force's 29th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron; Cdr. William B. Ecker, who led the Navy's VFP-62; and Capt. John I. Hudson of Marine Reconnaissance Composite Squadron 2. Behind them is the nose of an Air Force RF-101 Voodoo and the forward section of a Navy F8U-1P Crusader.

Nations reported that the Soviets had deployed 42 MRBMs to the island but that establishment of the U.S. quarantine had stopped the delivery of any IRBMs. With regard to verifying the dismantling of the weapon systems and their withdrawal by sea, the diplomats stated that Soviet authorities would assist the U.S. surveillance effort. In short order, the Soviets supplied a list of ships carrying the missiles from Cuba and their departure dates. Furthermore, the Soviets promised to carry the missiles as deck cargo and allow U.S. Navy ships and aircraft to move in close for accurate observation. The U.S. State Department then informed the Soviets of selected "alongside" points where U.S. Navy ships would inspect the outgoing Soviet freighters.

Beginning in early Novem-

ber, Navy, Marine, and Air Force low-level reconnaissance planes flew numerous missions over the Cuban launch sites, roads to the coast, and major ports. These flights clearly recorded the movement of the MRBMs and related equipment to the ports and the loading of Soviet merchantmen.

On 5 November, the first Soviet ships sailed from Mariel, and during the remainder of the week, another seven Soviet ships carrying missiles did the same. While several vessels did not depart when U.S. officials were told they would, there was no way for the Soviets to evade the "alongside" inspection force. U.S. naval surface and air units observed each of the missile-carrying ships closely. The Navy monitored the ships not only on their passage

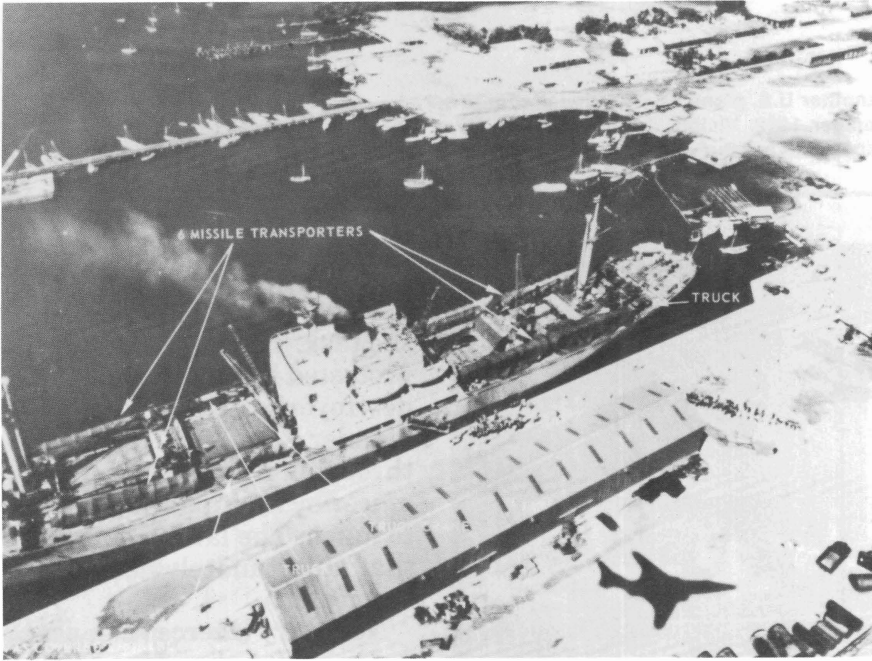
through the quarantine area but in the Mediterranean and even the Black Sea. Admiral Anderson wanted to make sure he could tell the president that all the missiles were "back in Russia."

Most Soviet merchant ship captains cooperated with the surveillance and inspection regime, but some tested the system. For example, the master of freighter *Bratsk* tried unsuccessfully to avoid the alongside inspection area. In another instance, the master of the freighter *Volgoles* refused several requests to remove tarpaulins covering missiles stowed on his deck when U.S. destroyer *Vesole* (DDR 878) came alongside. *Vesole's* commanding officer,

Soviet freighter *Bratsk*, photographed near the Bahamas by Lt. Kelsey Goodman from his HSS-2 helicopter of *Wasp's* Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron 3, carries military vehicles and covered missiles aft of the lifeboats.

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An Air Force RF-101 Voodoo, whose shadow can be seen at the bottom of this aerial photo, overflies a Soviet freighter, probably *Fizik Kurchatovk*, in Casilda Port, Cuba, on 6 November 1962. Seen on her deck are six tarpaulin-covered missiles. By such means, U.S. intelligence verified the removal of Soviet offensive weapons from the island.

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As a Navy P2V Neptune armed with general purpose bombs overflies the scene, U.S. destroyer *Vesole* steams alongside the Soviet freighter *Volgoles* to get a close look at her deck cargo. Only after U.S. authorities contacted Soviet representatives at the UN did the master of this freighter have his crewmen remove the tarpaulins to reveal dismantled missiles.